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STATE FOR SCA/FO A/DAS CAMP, SCA/A, S/CRS, S/CT, EUR/RPM,  
INL/CIVPOL  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG,  
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OSD FOR SHIVERS  
CENTCOM FOR CSTC-A, CG CJTF-82, POLAD

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SUBJECT: AFGHAN POLICE: FDD UPDATE FROM ZABUL PROVINCE

REF: A. 07 KABUL 3848

[1](#)B. 07 KABUL 3054

Summary

[1](#)1. (SBU) The Focused District Development (FDD) program to reform Afghan police at the local level has yielded positive results in the southern province of Zabul. Elite, national units provided an effective backstop as local units were rotated out for training. The highway was cleared of over 20 excess checkpoints, considerably easing travel along that segment of the Ring Road. Local police returned from the training centers with renewed commitment to serve their communities, and many corrupt elements have been weeded out. End summary.

Introduction

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Focused District Development (FDD) program, initiated by the Combined Security Transition Command - Afghanistan (CSTC-A), aims to reform police across Afghanistan at the district level (reftels). Beginning in late December 2007, FDD targeted seven districts across the country, rotating Afghan Uniform Police (AUP) out for eight weeks of retraining and backstopping them with Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) units. Three of the seven districts in this first cycle were in the southern province of Zabul. During a recent visit to the province, Emboffs spoke with police officials, Police Mentoring Team (PMT) personnel and mentors, and observed interactions between a police commander and local villagers, in order to assess the impact of FDD in the area.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Zabul Province is located in Afghanistan, s volatile southern regional command (RC-S) and shares a 40-mile border with Pakistan. The Ring Road, the country, s most critical roadway, runs through all three targeted districts, connecting the provinces of Kandahar and Ghazni. The provincial population of 370,000 is ethnically Pashtun, estimated to be 85 percent illiterate, and extremely poor,

with 58 percent of residents under age 18. Residents are predominantly subsistence farmers who tend sheep and grow almonds, apricots, pomegranates, grapes and wheat. Poppy production is minimal, and both the provincial and district governors are supportive of eradication efforts. While Zabul's security is relatively better than Kandahar or Helmand, Taliban insurgents and criminal elements continue to operate. On April 8, Taliban attacked a road survey team and their Afghan security guards in Dab Pass, about 30 miles east of the provincial capital of Qalat and in the area of the border between Qalat District and Shinkay District, killing 18 guards and wounding seven; that attack did not occur in an FDD-targeted district.

Initial Results: Positive

14. (SBU) FDD training of police from target districts in Zabul was broadly successful. GIROA officials held shuras (councils) with local elders to explain program goals and build support for FDD. About 150 Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) troops assumed responsibility for local security as AUP units from two of the districts (Tarnak wa Jaldak and Qalat) went to the INL-run Regional Training Center (RTC) at Kandahar, and police from a third district (Shah Joy, the province's most populous and prosperous district) went to RTC Jalalabad. On arrival, AUP turned in their weapons for replacement, repair or return at the end of the eight-week course. CSTC-A also provided units with new vehicles suitable to the local terrain, and a contract to provide repairs as necessary is in place. MOI-certified Afghan trainers instructed the AUP. Police pay has also gone smoothly since FDD came to Zabul. Many police are now paid

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through personal bank accounts, and the PMT confirmed that police were paid in full and on time last month.

15. (SBU) Initial reports from Zabul and other FDD-targeted areas found local residents impressed with ANCOP units and unhappy at having to give them up. ANCOP units are nationally recruited, more extensively trained and more committed to their jobs than most locally-recruited AUP, giving the returning trainees a hard act to follow. Yet according to the PMT commander in Qalat, the returned AUP, newly equipped and decked out in new uniforms, cut an impressive figure next to the departing ANCOP during the transfer-of-authority ceremony in late February. Since then, AUP have had a stronger voice at weekly provincial security council meetings; local Afghan National Army (ANA) units, accustomed to viewing police as a band of yahoos, have begun to view them almost as rivals. Subsequent reports have also found elders pleased to have their Pashto-speaking AUP units back, as many of the Dari-speaking ANCOP units had difficulty communicating with the locals. The PMT commander described local National Directorate of Security personnel as still loath to share intelligence in a timely way, although he hopes to change that dynamic, now that newly-trained police are in place. Also according to the PMT commander, the provincial Chief of Police has supported gains achieved, invoking his chain of command when the governor has sought allegedly to exceed his authorities in directing police operations.

16. (SBU) One area of particular success in Zabul Province was collaboration between the CSTC-A Police Mentoring Team and ANCOP to eliminate over 20 "checkpoints" that pre-FDD police and criminal elements had used to extract illegal taxes and otherwise shake down Ring Road travelers. Some 300 so-called Afghan Highway Police were evicted from one checkpoint, now repaired and soon to be returned to AUP control. As a result of the shutdown of excess checkpoints, travel from one end of the province to the other, which used to take eight hours, now takes two.

17. (SBU) The AUP commander at one of the remaining Ring Road

checkpoints is First Lieutenant Abdullah Razaq. Razaq had recently come to Zabul Province from Bagrami, a rural district in Kabul Province. He told Emboffs that he had received FDD training at one of the RTCs, as had the 41 troops he was responsible for; however, only 24 of that number remained on duty. He described those who had left as insubordinate and unwilling to trade AFG 30,000-40,000/month (USD 600-800) in shakedown income for the AFG 5,000/month (USD 100) that is a patrolman's standard pay. When they were not allowed to rob the people, he continued, they just quit. He said that as an officer from Kabul, the principal challenges he faced were language (Razaq speaks Dari but not Pashto) and local tribal allegiances. Since a large recent battle with Taliban elements, according to Razaq, there were two or three attacks a day on patrol teams (rather than on the checkpoint itself, located between the city of Qalat and the Zabul-Kandahar border). According to DynCorp mentors who have traveled more extensively through Zabul Province, the checkpoints have also been the target of many attacks by the Taliban.

#### Signs of Popular Support

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18. (SBU) In the village of Sadu, local elders greeted the visiting AUP zone commander Abdul Raziq Salangi respectfully. Captain Salangi told the villagers about police retraining and of his desire to ensure their security. He pledged that the police would serve the common good and called upon the people of Sadu to resist Taliban overtures and to report them to him personally, distributing cards with his name and telephone number. The villagers acknowledged a change in the attitude of police, saying they were more polite toward village residents since returning from the RTC and more

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respectful of the sanctity of village homes. Above all, they wanted to be left in peace to finish building a reservoir and expand a network of irrigation ditches. They also told of previous violations of their homes and of unfounded detentions by police. From the village lane flanked by high mud walls, the elders invited the commander and Emboffs to continue the meeting inside their home in a gesture of hospitality. The residents of a second village, Bakorzai, were more guarded in their welcome. There, the captain delivered his standard talk, also cautioning that the insurgents who arrived from Pakistan were not the friends of Afghanistan and did not deserve the support of the people. The principal elder maintained a skeptical tone, however, complaining of past police behavior, including the arrests of ten village men and searches that violated women's quarters.

#### Still to Come, and Lessons Learned

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19. (SBU) Initial results in these three districts have been impressive and bode well for future cycles of FDD. Still, there is much work to be done. Afghan and Coalition forces in Zabul are now focusing on how to prevent World Food Program drops from being misappropriated. The UN needs to take advantage of FDD gains and establish a permanent presence in Qalat, the provincial capital. The poor condition of roads linking outlying districts and the provincial center continues to hamper aid delivery. On the positive side, USAID has helped the national bank (Da Afghanistan Bank) to establish a branch in Qalat, and has also established a provincial radio station to enable better communication between local government and largely illiterate local residents. Several Emboff interlocutors complained about police arrests going nowhere, as cases were never brought to trial; INL's Justice Sector Support Program is currently conducting a pilot training program for prosecutors from FDD-targeted districts and in the coming months will extend such training to other districts including Zabul. A USAID program to improve court administration has already

targeted justice officials from the province. A local version of 911 (1198) now in the works should make it easier for local residents to call on police for help.

¶10. (SBU) As successive cycles have begun, the Ministry of Interior (MOI) has proven increasingly supportive of FDD; however, its capacity to direct even isolated segments of overall operations remains weak. A key challenge that is currently being addressed is a 16,000 shortfall of non-commissioned officers (NCOs); there are currently under 9,000 NCOs, and a new class of 1,716 NCO graduates is expected in June. In Cycle 1, the MOI managed to send NCOs for Zabul to the RTCs only in the seventh week of the eight-week program. Many of these collected their personal equipment and deserted. In the long run, the MOI will also need to consider how to secure FDD gains by regular oversight and support to the district level after the PMTs complete their mission and depart.

¶11. (SBU) On the training side, rank-conscious Afghan officers who have not received basic training have resisted any suggestion that they join the rank and file in the classroom; instead, INL is considering offering an alternative version of the basic course for those officers who lack it, and continuing to foster unit cohesion through other opportunities. The tempo of FDD and limits on RTC capacity make it difficult to integrate training in functions such as logistics, advanced first aid and driver education in the schedule of instruction, and for now these subjects are offered to targeted groups of trainees on an opportunity basis after hours. Mentors at RTC Kandahar have concluded that putting whole units through training together resonates extremely well with troops from tribal areas; even when they belong to various tribes, the shared training experience effectively encourages unit cohesion.

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¶12. (SBU) Also important to the overall success of FDD will be maintaining a complementary fit between civilian and military roles. While civilian mentors emphasize the police's law-enforcement functions, in Afghanistan, security environment military personnel provide police with valuable survival training. Among FDD-targeted districts in Cycles 1 through 3, the same security conditions also limit the ability of civilian mentors to sustain their presence among retrained police without a military escort, with the possible exception of Chahar Dara in Konduz Province. Yet it is vital to maintain the civilian character of the overall police mentoring program in order to maintain the distinction between police and the army. Toward that end, U.S. civilian and military colleagues are working together to ensure appropriate civilian participation in future mentoring efforts under FDD. One major problem is that as FDD expands to more target districts, PMT resources will be stretched ever more thinly.

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